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‘There Was A Third Man . . .’: Tales from a Global Policy Consultation on Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals

Deval Desai and Mareike Schomerus

ABSTRACT

This article reflects on the experience of the two authors as ‘experts’ during consultations on justice and security indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals. The authors examine how the tension between the indeterminacy of the concepts to be measured — justice and security — and the concreteness of indicators shaped the politics of the consultations. Participants used this tension strategically to destabilize notions of time, space and identity on which knowledge production rests. In doing so, they blurred the distinction between academics, advocates and policy makers. They did this to lay claim to some aspects of implementation while distancing themselves from others. The authors then juxtapose this with personal experience of researching South Sudanese citizens, who challenged and deconstructed that distinction. At the same time, experts at the consultations incorporated an image of these citizens as an ethical justification for the discussion. The authors argue that a more complex sociology of knowledge is required to understand how these global knowledge practices work from the global to the local. Such a sociology of knowledge acknowledges fluidity and grapples with how knowledge practices defer and delimit moments of decision; it requires an ethico-political — rather than just a political — critique.

INTRODUCTION: ‘VIENNA IS A CLOSED CITY . . .’¹

In the opening scene of Orson Welles’ 1949 movie *The Third Man*, a narrator speaks over images of post-war Vienna. He explains that the city has been

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1. From *The Third Man* (Greene and Reed, 1969: 91).

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divided among four occupying powers — the USA, UK, Russia and France — and adds: ‘But the centre of the city, that’s international, policed by an International Patrol . . . one member of each of the four powers. What a hope they had, all strangers to the place and none of them could speak the same language’ (Greene and Reed, 1969: 12). In today’s Vienna, the centre of the city has been reclaimed, Austrian to its café core. Yet a little further out, a weighty complex of grey, crescent-shaped UN office buildings remains an international island. We were invited to these curved enclaves of international technocracy in 2013, along with 20 or so ‘experts’ in security and justice, to develop indicators for the post-2015 Agenda, otherwise known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We too were all strangers to the place, invited as representatives of three different powers: the republics of Academia, Policy Making and Advocacy. We nominally spoke our national languages: academic Critique, policy Pragmatism and advocacy’s Normativity. We had been invited to police an international zone — in our case not Vienna, but the world. But rather than sending forces, indicators would be our tools of discipline and order. By developing indicators for the SDGs, we would dictate what was to count as legitimate development and thus influence where and how aid would flow.

There had been an earlier international development policing operation just 15 years previously. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set a series of highly visible targets for the period between 2000 and 2015, such as halving the proportion of people living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day, or reducing by three-quarters the proportion of women dying in childbirth (Berg and Desai, 2013; Fukuda-Parr and Yamin, 2013). The MDGs had little truck with harder-to-measure issues like security and justice. This time around, though, we had an opportunity to fight on the front lines. Security and justice were in the running to be named in one of the SDGs. The participants in our meeting had been invited by a UN agency — one of dozens with a mandate to work on security and justice — to help develop a comprehensive set of targets and indicators for those two sectors that the agency could propose for incorporation into the SDGs.

Our role on the front lines was not exactly clear.² We knew that what we would produce in Vienna could in some way feed into our hosts’ take on security and justice indicators. In doing so, we might influence the many other UN agencies that were suiting up and getting ready to patrol, and maybe even eventually contribute an official way to measure an SDG centred on justice and security.³ But exactly what that SDG might look like remained a mystery. Whose justice, security from what? At best, we had a rough idea

2. We got a hint of our hosts’ ambitions from the invitation. They talked of their significant experience in security and justice work since the 1990s. They recognized that this work was not the preserve of a single agency and hoped to use the consultations to influence — or even set the SDG agenda for — the 40 or more UN agencies working on these issues.

3. This was to become SDG 16 on peace and justice.

from the report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which suggested a policing beat that would ‘ensure good governance and effective institutions’, and ‘ensure stable and peaceful societies’ (UN, 2013).

And so three powers arrived in Vienna, speaking three different languages, patrolling a beat whose borders we did not know and which were of someone else’s making. What hope did we have of ‘policing’ the world on its way to justice and security? Given that our home country, Academia, offered the refuge of scholarly detachment, we thought we would go to Vienna and find out. For both of us, it was an opportunity to participate in and analyse a process of knowledge production in the service of global governance. Here is how we thought it would work: each participant would do his duty. Advocates would offer and defend aspirational norms, academics would offer sceptical critiques, and policy makers would sketch out pragmatic ways forward. Indicators would be a product of the political skirmishes among these three groups. We would play our role, and at the same time be the ethnographer-cum-critic of global governmentality, ready to narrate the process and its characters afterwards.⁴

In two days of consultations, we seemed to all agree that it was important to include security and justice on the SDG agenda. We considered dozens of possible indicators, from the number of police per 100,000 people, to the number of human rights instruments ratified. But while talking through these possibilities, participants rehearsed a familiar set of agonies about knowledge practices and measurement. We discussed the potential and limitations of balancing the local and the global, of scepticism and normative aspiration, of unintended consequences and discipline. And in the end, we had not defined indicators for just and secure societies; the outcome document was simply a revised version of the invitation note. A few months later, several of the participants reconvened in New York City to consult on the same stuff all over again, at the behest of yet another UN agency seeking to mobilize its own patrol (and showing little interest in the document from the Vienna consultation).⁵

With its prescribed roles and well-rehearsed arguments, the consultation process in Vienna seemed very familiar to us. Yet at the same time it was

4. We both share an appreciation of stories of global governance that grapple with how the arena of expert engagement is structured. Of particular interest here have been processes of developing the notion of a stable area of expertise which then allows participation and consultation along a defined field of engagement: see Deeb and Marcus (2011); Johns (2016); Lewis and Mosse (2006a, 2006b); Olivier de Sardan (2005); Riles (2001, 2011).

5. We only learned about the plans for the subsequent New York meeting in Vienna. Nor did we know in advance that there was not going to be a distinct outcome document. At the time, we — just like ethnographers of meetings — presumed that, whatever the outcome, the consultation would be bounded, discrete and be ‘recognized’ through an outcome document that bore some (or no) relation to the discussions. See, for example, Riles (2006); Strathern (2003).

deeply confusing. The roles and national languages of each occupying force were not as clearly demarcated as we had expected. Positions and arguments were fluid, not stable. Advocates, academics and policy makers swapped uniforms at will and created an ever-evolving pidgin. Such tactics cut off our retreat to academic remove: we had nowhere to stand to observe what was going on, and no way of telling who was friend or foe.

We came to realize that these consultations were not really a technical or political exercise about governing the world. Rather, we were witnessing a contest over the *economy of implementation* of knowledge practices — people staking out a position so that at some point in the future they might get money to develop statistical capacity, build research budgets and so on. The contours of this contest were determined by the emptiness of the underlying concepts of security and justice. Each side could easily deploy well-rehearsed arguments in each other's languages — a 'context matters!' here, a 'there's no political will for that' there — to divvy up future spoils. It was money for old trope.

In this article, we reflect on what we saw and did in Vienna as an ethnographic contribution to the sociology of knowledge in global governance. We argue that this sociology generally seeks to reveal the hidden politics of global governance and, to do so, assumes to its detriment the stable division of 'knowledge work' (Blackler, 1995) between academia, policy making and advocacy. This division may well enable academics to contribute to policy processes while critiquing their politics. A movement between engagement and critical detachment is part of the academic's role in the process, resting on a contextual and sceptical orientation that constitutes her lot.

Yet we argue that this stable division of knowledge work is both misguided and has unintended effects. These clear distinctions between roles function as a framework through which participants in consultations like Vienna can *allocate blame* whenever things go wrong. They might rail against the dominance of advocates over academics, or express resentment at constant demands to be pragmatic rather than normative. In general, they can frame the process as one in which the deck is always already stacked in favour of one group over the others (Lewis and Mosse, 2006b; Li, 2007b).

We suggest a different approach. Rather than analysing consultations about indeterminate concepts like security and justice in terms of the political contests between already-constituted groups, we approach Vienna — and consultation processes more broadly — as an exercise in *deferring the time and place of policy decisions*. In so doing, these consultations produce an economy of policy implementation. In the act of deferring, participants collapsed a structural understanding of knowledge production. Instead, consultations focused our attention on individual moments of decision within the process of implementation, along with participants' own potential future role in taking those decisions. This future role could be played on behalf of whoever ended up holding the implementation purse strings, including the

agency that had brought us together. This, we suggest, means that we need an ethical critique of the specific expert and her position in the chains of decision making that constitute policy, rather than a critique of her generic role.

We begin with method. In order to bring forth our experience of fluidity in the consultation, we write using disruption of identity, time and space. Next, we turn to the literature to which we are contributing — on knowledge production at the global level in the service of global governance. We point to the presumption of a stable division of labour (to be upheld in the breach as in the observance, to be sure) between academia, policy making and advocacy. We experienced this division as a fluid performance rather than a concrete edifice. We then map the source of this fluidity in our story, finding it in the relationship between the indeterminacy of security and justice and the concreteness of the indicator as a knowledge artefact.

We go on to sketch our experiences at the consultations and how they revealed global governance to us as the politics and performance of mundane measurement. Mareike then juxtaposes Vienna with her experience as a researcher in South Sudan. The people she researched — we think of those on the receiving end of the SDGs as the fourth occupying force in, but absent from, Vienna — spoke yet another language, one that did not care about our distinctions between academics, policy makers and advocates. The South Sudanese just wanted to know what we were saying about them, and what was in it for them. Yet the division of labour in Vienna was such that this fourth force was conjured up as a resource by the other three forces, justifying all kinds of arguments. The absence of the fourth force in any concrete fashion seemed to show global governance in all its irrelevance, revealed again in the politics and performance of measurement.

So we keep returning to *The Third Man*, a tale of intrigue, betrayal and disguised profit. The film's antagonist is Harry Lime, a black marketeer who dilutes, adulterates and sells penicillin that kills many. Unaware of Harry's doings, his old (and now broke) childhood friend Holly Martins, a writer, comes to Vienna. Lime has offered him 'some sort of a job' there, and Martins takes the bone he has been thrown — only to find that their old relationship has changed beyond recognition. Indeed, when Holly arrives, Lime is presumed dead, only to reappear. At the film's climactic moment, having found out the awful truth about Lime's work, Martins hesitates to shoot Lime when he has him in his sights. To the last, he struggles to judge his amoral erstwhile friend. He is flummoxed by their shared past, the finality of pulling the trigger, and the moral casuistry on display everywhere in Vienna. Against a backdrop of shifting relationships, shadowy figures and hidden governance in Vienna — a place where things are not what they seem — the audience is put in Martins' place, dared to judge Lime profiting from a system that allows him to sell medicine to those in need, no matter the quality and the consequences.

A NOTE ON METHODS: 'I'VE NEVER KEPT YOU OUT OF ANYTHING ... YET'⁶

After the discussions, we both left Vienna with a sense of rupture about who we were and what we were doing there. We examine this rupture here, exploring our imaginations of people's roles (including our own), and how they were washed away in the fluidity of the consultations. We argue that this fluidity is more than just the unstable oscillation between the 'inside' and 'outside' that marks the challenge of writing ethnographically about policy (Shore et al., 2011). Those who write about such oscillations suggest that the insider nature of the expert consultation challenges one's sense of outside academic remove and critical orientation. By contrast, our experience in Vienna suggested that the effort required to maintain the role of the sceptical academic was an intrinsic part of the functioning of the consultations themselves. That effort contributed to the production of the role of the academic and its subsequent mobilization by participants. The role was then transcended and destabilized as part of the overall struggle over the political economy of implementation.

From what stable vantage point can we write about a fluid process? The sort of reflexive writing we want to undertake frequently entails reinforcement — rather than rupture — of the roles we are examining. For example, in this article, we perform the authorial role of academics speaking an academic language. So we opt to write 'infrareflexively' (Latour, 1988; Leydesdorff, 2006: 148–49), employing style and motif to help us turn our disjointed, uncanny feelings about the consultations into academic prose.⁷

We anchor our reflections in unstable scripts about ourselves, a product of our fuzzy memory of who we were during the consultations. Deval articulates himself as a sometime lawyer, sometime policy professional, sometime academic, and oft-time professional sceptic. For him, global indicators for something as complex as justice and security represented a fascinating challenge to world builders trying to balance aspirational sentiment, political sophistication and technocratic competence.⁸ Mareike's view of the world has been shaped by her journalistic and ethnographic attempts to decipher complexity through the experience of the individual, probably seeking

6. Greene and Reed (1969: 97).

7. See Latour (1988); we share Latour's emphasis on style as a means of escaping the infinite regress of positionality in a reflexive project such as this (Lewis and Mosse, 2006b: 8), but perhaps not quite so defensively.

8. Our use of free indirect speech to narrate ourselves and much of the activity in Vienna is intended to reflect the tension in indicator production between what appears to be true and what has the quality of truth — the fundamentally modern tension between verisimilitude and verity. See Jameson (2013: 37): 'If it means something, it can't be real; if it is real, it can't be absorbed by purely mental or conceptual categories'.

something genuine in the process (albeit with the self-awareness that comes as standard with the toolkit of the thoughtful qualitative researcher). She felt that bird's-eye-view measurement tools do not capture individuality, but as a pragmatist and generally nosy person she was keen to see how this conversation would go. We did not know each other all that well before the consultations, and we certainly did not go with a shared agenda to reflect and write. The idea emerged much later as we tried to make sense of our experience in Vienna (and subsequent consultations on the SDGs in which we participated).

Stylistically, we portray Vienna in the fourth person and in an analytic, impressionistic and sketchy fashion. Quotes we provide from the consultations are stylized to present our point, but rooted in our memory and notes of discussions at the consultation. We contrast this with a picture of South Sudan, co-written but in Mareike's voice, providing a sort of ethnographic narrative with direct quotes from field research.⁹ Our style meanders between ethnographic, journalistic, phenomenological and analytic.

Thematically, we juxtapose recurring motifs to reflect axes of space, time and identity, since it was along these three axes that we felt rupture (Ashmore, 1989; David Kennedy, 1984, 1993). The ways in which we destabilize space are most obvious. We write from the generic 'global' about Vienna and South Sudan, along with the intersections of the three spaces. Time is no longer linear: in our retelling we combine or juxtapose moments in Vienna with backstories of ourselves, experiences in South Sudan from an undefined and frozen moment of field research, a textual 'now' in which we write, and a future defined by the extent to which measurable goals are achieved. Reflecting how confusing this was to us and our own identities, we shift between the first, third and fourth person, producing ourselves within the text alongside scenes, dialogue and omniscient narration from a film set in post-war Vienna about a writer and a casuist. Anchoring our experience in *The Third Man* echoes the insights of those who argue that film and literature can represent the complexity of development processes in ways that analytical writing cannot.¹⁰ Holly Martins' moment of hesitation is a case in point. We produce this piece as a *conversation* (Rorty, 1979), mirroring the open-endedness and fluidity of our experience in Vienna.

9. This reflects the challenges of thick description of a transnational 'centre' that defines itself by its resistance to being unveiled and contextualized — rather, being the space of global analysis — and at the same time this 'centre's' construction of a 'periphery' from where descriptive context emerges to inform that analysis (Deeb and Marcus, 2011; Riles, 2001).

10. Lewis et al. (2008, 2013, 2014) have famously sought to broaden the aesthetic imagination of development scholars by exhorting them to (inter alia) read Dickens and watch *Slumdog Millionaire*. Our take is more stylistic, leveraging film's power of disjointed representation into our methodological strategy (see Poole, 2005).

THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION: 'GOOD FELLOWS, ON THE WHOLE'¹¹

Neither of us went to Vienna with a clear sense of mission. We had both been engaged with the post-2015 process from a variety of perspectives, including programming, policy and academic research (but not advocacy). Vienna appeared to be an opportunity to concretize our sceptical thinking about the SDGs — for example, how they might be decontextual, apolitical and misallocate aid. Before leaving, we speculated about the other attendees. We — given our profiles — clearly filled the role of 'academic sceptics'. But the other participants? The organizers had not provided bios and furtive googling of names gave few hints. Whatever role they were to play in Vienna, many could credibly be described as some mix of academic, policy maker and/or advocate.

This is, of course, not unusual. Sociologists of knowledge in global governance have often grappled with how deeply intertwined policy making and academia are. Some fear it. Goldman (2006) and Rottenburg (2009) see this imbrication as submitting critical thought to the imperatives of (neo-liberal) global governmentality and to the related logics and ideologies of development institutions. They lament researchers who are hired as ad hoc consultants to produce weak justificatory scholarship for development projects, and the suppression of any critical findings they might produce.¹² Li is more ambivalent. She suggests academics must get to know the background processes and practices of global governance, which might entail direct participation in governance processes at the same time as producing ethnographies of them (Li, 2007a, 2007b).¹³ Roy (2010) is even more positive. Discussing microfinance initiatives, she views thoughtful policy makers and project leaders at the World Bank as potential 'double agents' who carry academic critiques to the heart of power. All, however, understand this imbrication to be the playing of different roles at different times, as appropriate. The roles may be strategized, but their logics and functions remain discrete.

Like these studies of development projects and programmes, sociological or ethnographic studies of indicators in global governance also presume that different and discrete roles exist. These studies seek to explain how indicators emerge from their contested processes of production as seemingly

11. Greene and Reed (1969: 12).

12. Rather than indicators, these two authors focus on the relationship between academia and development *projects* (a dam in Laos for Goldman and a fictionalized waterworks improvement project for Rottenburg).

13. Bueger and Mireanu (2014: 119) are even more positive about a praxis turn. Drawing heavily on Latour, they argue for 'an instrumental understanding of academic practice as productive of social change and innovation', thereby requiring a 'proximity' to centres of power, albeit without Li's ambivalent sensibility regarding the importance of understanding those centres, and the potential enrolment that entails.

authoritative, neutral and technical artefacts. In doing so, they try to recover the core of the contested politics of the thing being indicated, be it who counts as a terrorist or what counts as labour flexibility (Gabay, 2011; Johns, 2016; Santos, 2009; Urueña, 2015). The supposed neutrality of the indicator rests on the expertise that underpins indicator production, which in turn rests on experts playing specialized roles that entail their own particular language — and even costumes or outfits.¹⁴

One might expect, then, a division of expert labour between advocacy, academic and policy ‘tribes’ (Leijonhufvud, 1973) around the table in Vienna, irrespective of the participants’ backgrounds or identities.¹⁵ Lewis and Mosse’s analysis (2006b: 5–7, drawing on Quarles van Ufford et al., 2003) suggests that this division of labour goes beyond identity: for them, these tribes adopt *logics* of ‘hope’ (advocates), ‘critical reflection’ (academics) and ‘administrative politics’ (policy makers). We had supposed that in Vienna there would be what Lewis and Mosse (2006b: 5) describe as ‘an inevitable disjuncture’ between these logics. They would be clear, distinct, separate and stable: the three tribes would come from such ‘different locations’ that ‘it [would] not always [be] possible to translate between them’, as Lewis and Mosse (ibid.: 6) put it.

Yet we also shared Lewis and Mosse’s (ibid.) cautious but optimistic tone about the possibilities in our bringing the logic of critical reflection to the process. We presumed that advocates would mobilize counsels of hope and despair, tales of pain and possibility. They would simplify the world into normative challenges, and offer normative solutions. Despite the plural nature of our experience, we as academics would be called upon to raise critical eyebrows to their pleas, apply contextual knowledge, identify dilemmas, and thereby lend complexity and credibility to the process. That same critical orientation would also enable us to step back after the fact, uncovering and recounting the politics of the process. In between the advocate and the academic, cool-headed policy makers would hammer out indicators on the anvils of pragmatism. They would mediate complexity and simplicity by settling on indicators that appeared to assert universal knowledge — although everyone around the table would understand them to be heuristic devices, so that if and whenever the indicators proved problematic we could unveil their hidden politics in our subsequent writing in our tribal language.

We stylize the roles and functions of participants in global knowledge practices from the perspective of Lewis, Mosse, Li and others in Figure 1. We break the roles down into *logics*, or how participants are supposed to think about questions in general; *approaches*, or how they think about

14. See Rajah (2015) and Uribe (2015: 137) for a discussion of the ties and suits that mark out savvy and disembedded global technocrats from advocates and everyone else at World Justice Project ‘outreach meetings’. See also Hüskens (2006).

15. See Olivier de Sardan (2005) who is deeply invested in the distinction between academia and policy as modes of identity.

Figure 1. *The Orthodox Sociology of Knowledge of Global Knowledge Practices*

Role	Logic	Approach	Tactic
Academic	Critique	Complexity	Problem (creating new problems)
Policy maker	Pragmatism	Complexity and simplicity	Problem and solution
Advocate	Normativity	Simplicity	Problem and solution

specific questions; and *tactics*, or how they frame and articulate their responses to specific questions. As participants introduced themselves in Vienna, presenting their institutional affiliation and reason for being in the room, they fell into one of the three roles presented in Figure 1. Yet what unfolded quickly left our neat categorizations behind. While the logics appeared — or at least sentences that sounded like they were drawing on them — roles, approaches and tactics blended, transformed and separated again at different times. In the absence of a clear notion from the organizers about our potential impact, we were left playing a game whose stakes were unclear and whose rules were constantly changing. To explore how roles and contributions transmuted and moved, we begin with the concrete knowledge artefact we were engaged in producing: the indicator of justice and security.

INDICATORS AS KNOWLEDGE ARTEFACTS: ‘WE SHOULD HAVE DUG DEEPER THAN A GRAVE’¹⁶

Indicators govern. They are not a mere reflection of reality — as knowledge practices, indicators participate in the *production* of reality. This notion has become axiomatic in the literature on global governance. Most writers seem anxious about two things: *how* indicators govern, and what happens *when* they govern. Alongside functionalist critiques of the adequacy and effectiveness of neat numbers, some writers are concerned with the magic of quantification and its disciplinary power. The indicator is analysed as a stable and capacious cipher for some form of neoliberal ideology or governmentality (see Davis et al., 2012; Krever, 2013). Some see the indicator as an exemplar of knowledge practices that express the will to submit to hegemonic global rule (Davis et al., 2012; Foucault, 2010; Porter, 1995); as legitimizing a particular form of subject/object relationship that is mediated by scientific knowledge (Latour, 2004); or as the blending of map (measurement) and terrain (reality) (Riles, 2001).

16. Greene and Reed (1969: 87).

These various critiques of indicators were not far from our minds as we settled into our seats — and roles — around the table in Vienna, even as we proposed tracking the existence of legislation on violence against women, or the percentage of the population that expressed confidence in the judiciary. Indeed, over coffee, dinner or ice cream many participants aired their apprehension about indicators' limitations, in knowing, exasperated or cynical forms.¹⁷ We remember hearing (or perhaps we even said ourselves): 'Everybody wants to count something! Why? How much relevance do these have to all of the different contexts in which they are going to have to operate? What about the unintended consequences of trying to count things?'. Offering supposedly alienating critiques of indicators as over-determined knowledge products made for a comfortable, and probably quite well-rehearsed, performance. In fields with a clear terrain of argumentation, indicators offer a vernacular to spell out stylized and role-appropriate positions with respect to knowledge practices: the academic critic ('Context!'), the normative advocate ('Why are you so obsessed with counting? We need to right wrongs!'), the 'But-what-do-we-do-on-Monday-morning' practitioner, and so on (Bourdieu, 1977, 1981, 1984, 1990; Dezalay and Garth, 1996; Duncan Kennedy, 1991). We were a group of sophisticated role players, quick to internalize critiques and deploy them to further our position.

So if roles and arguments were so clear, how was it that we emerged confused? We point to the long history of justice and security as contested concepts in global policy. Justice and security have been described as a series of 'hooray[s] for our side' (Waldron, 2002: 139), or as 'a shorthand description of the positive aspects of any given political [or legal] system' (Bingham, 2011: 5). Rather than grapple with the contestability of the concepts (Desai, 2014), we all adopted contestability as a strategy to promote our own goals, undermining unappealing suggestions with refrains such as: 'But what do we *really* mean by the rule of law? Can security even be measured? Do we mean people, states or streets should be safer? Isn't it weird that we are all around a table trying to come up with indicators for these messy things?'. Unlike other rehearsed arguments in the debate, which take aim at indicators as over-determined knowledge products, the arguments in Vienna challenged the very possibility of filling the concepts of justice and security with meaning in any form (indicator or otherwise). All it took was a well-placed appeal to relativism to remind us that the underlying concept was empty. We were able to debate a vacant abstraction and its inadequate measurement, rather than trying to hold an indicator stable through ongoing knowledge work and the authority of expertise.¹⁸

17. On reflexivity as a self-conscious marker of vanguardism or sophistication in a field (here, academia itself), see Wacquant and Bourdieu (1989).

18. Arguments in the literature about over-determined indicators suggest that they can be markers of chastened world-ruling ambitions — existing despite the full knowledge of their inadequacy which does not deter from allowing them to become the basis for 'actionability'

Instead, we divided the world into an inside and an outside, a just and unjust, a secure and insecure. We could place the dividing line anywhere, as in the following exchange:

X: Road deaths are a serious killer in most developing countries. And how can a country be secure when so many of its population are dying? We should have an indicator on the number of road deaths.

Y: Women and young girls suffer also. We know that has serious development impacts. We should also be measuring rates of femicide.

The indicator became at once concrete and arbitrary — for what is more concrete than a number, one that *indicates*, even if it could just as easily refer to road deaths as to femicide, or to the number of judges per capita as to the length of time it takes to get a business permit?

We were not participating in the creation or reproduction of hegemonies of knowledge/power, nor were we fighting battles to win control over the *content* of the discussion or the *direction* of the indicator. Rather, as we argue next, the indicator's concrete arbitrariness meant that it became a placeholder that was simultaneously a promise of instantiation as well as concrete proof of such a promise. Around this placeholder, participants from the three tribes were able to change positions, playing with the presumed division of labour in the process (one that, we remind ourselves, underpins the possibility of academic critique of such processes as that which we present here). Mixing logics, approaches, tactics and roles allowed everyone to lay a claim to parts of indicator *implementation* — the future guarantee of power and resources in a time and place unknown.

A BOUNDARY WALTZ IN VIENNA: 'WHAT CAN I DO? BE REASONABLE ... GIVE MYSELF UP? THIS IS A FAR FAR BETTER THING'¹⁹

An indicator for the SDGs should structure time (progress to a goal with a deadline of 2030) and space (tracking progress within a polity or nation state). It should emerge from contests between advocates (demanding imminent change, globally), academic critics (calling for difficult and long-term change that takes place in a multiplicity of spaces), and policy makers (suggesting feasible change, attuned to the specificities of countries). When generating indeterminate indicators of justice and security, however, we produced unstructured time and space — malleable and never quite real.

In terms of time, we began with urgency. At the opening session and beyond, some version of 'now is our chance to get justice and security on

(Johns, 2016). However, 'actionable' was only one of several goals attached to the formulation of indicators. Participants also pushed for 'relevant', 'goal-oriented', 'end-user-focused', and other modifiers that suited their position. This, we suggest, points to the deeper instability of trying to produce indicators for justice and security.

19. Greene and Reed (1969: 96).

the global stage' was a common refrain.²⁰ However, any suggested indicator for security or justice ran the risk of meaningless indeterminacy, given the 'essentially contested' (Gallie, 1955) nature of the two concepts being measured. Even if spelled out in some form of UN document, achieving what the indicator suggested could be deferred endlessly — indeed beyond the expiry of the SDGs in 2030 and the subsequent process to design the next iteration (as happened with some of the MDGs). Since there was no real link between the indicators and an overarching concept of security or justice, the problem of measurement could be conjured up at any point, and the act of determining the meaning or content of the indicators could be kicked down the road. This meant that indicators could be reviewed — and reworked and even rejected — at any moment during the SDGs' implementation, and by any development actor. 'Can justice and security even be *turned* into an indicator?' was thus an equally common refrain within the group. The answer, both from the convenors and some participants, was to think of the consultations as a useful exercise, and to bracket bigger questions with the promise of further 'technical work' at an undetermined moment in the future in order to resolve them (Latour and Woolgar, 1986). Our proposed indicators thus continued shifting between urgency and deferral, in the present and the future, both 'now' and 'never'.²¹

Our indicators were also meant to become real and instantiated in an imagined place that arbitrarily included some spaces and displaced others. For example, some policy makers suggested that we develop indicators for national governance by measuring the percentage of people who had paid a bribe to a public official in the last twelve months. This focus on national indicators implied that data collection was to be supported through national, state-level technical assistance, possibly side-lining other groups like local civil society. However, advocates could just as easily focus on civil society to collect data for the very same indicator. This would marginalize state actors and promote networks between local and transnational civil society groups in similarly collapsible ways. We were happy with this indeterminacy: it kept everyone's options open and ensured that we might insert ourselves into that unstructured future in the way that would suit us best.

The participants' process of producing this imagined time and space set the stage for the collapse of the three traditional roles we had expected. Whether we were talking about the number of judges per capita, the level of

20. The organizers had facilitated a shared basis for the initial conversations, drawing on the report of the High-level Panel that outlined what a future set of development goals might look like (UN, 2013).

21. This clearly resonates with Benjamin's notion of 'homogenous, empty time' on which development seeks to inscribe a vision of the future (Kelly, 1998). Development practitioners produce this future through 'project time', which exists between a linear progression of development-as-accelerated-modernization, and the repeated, three-to-five year temporal cycles of projects (Craig and Porter, 1997). However, rather than produce ordered time, our indicators flirted with ideas of progress in order to keep time 'empty' — for now.

trust in a court, or the number of deaths in prison, we found that discussions clustered around three different types of claim over the process of indicator implementation. These draw on and decompose the notion of translation in Latour (1993: 10–14). They were, first, people who wanted to generate knowledge about the world; second, people who wanted to translate said knowledge into a language of governing; and third, people who wanted to transmit the governing language as part of a legitimating or authoritative package into spaces to be governed.

Knowledge Generation

Positioning oneself as a knowledge generator requires an authoritative claim over the credibility of one's information, which rests on *method*. As 'academics', we thought we had that covered. Yet everyone quickly asserted themselves as data-gathering technicians:

Getting good qualitative data in some of these places is really hard. My experience with surveys in [country X] . . .

I spent a long time working with national statistical offices on data collection. Many have very low capacity . . .

Our NGO produces an annual survey of violence against women. We've refined our survey instrument over the last few years — we want to avoid the pitfalls of leading questions and bias . . .

We tried on a few occasions to suggest that the politics of method — who wins and who loses from different types of quantitative and qualitative methodologies — might be an important concern. We were met with smiles: this was an important point, of course, but an abstract one better suited for the ivory tower. People were more concerned with whether country counterparts had the technical capacity to gather data, and with asserting that, despite their normative commitments, they wanted to produce unbiased data and help their country counterparts do the same.

As a result, in order to enter this conversation, Deval abandoned all talk of methodological rigour and spoke instead about his experience with the politics of a development institution. He described his personal experience of mobilizing funding within an institution's bureaucracy. That process, he said, illuminated the ways in which different types of data (subjective/objective, qualitative/quantitative) were convincing to different constituencies within that bureaucracy (economists, project managers, country teams and so on), depending on the way in which those constituencies chose to articulate the problem (market failure, implementation failure, political challenges and so forth). The time and space that the indicator was to govern thus became a product of the relationship between a set of strategic calculations within a development institution and the specific real-world context in which the problem was to be articulated — a relationship that would continually evolve and which could continually be bracketed.

Figure 2. Performances around Knowledge Generation

Role	Logic	Approach	Tactic
Academic / Policy maker	Politics and method	Complexity through context and method	Problem
Policy maker / Academic	Method	Complexity through mixed-methods design; simplicity through applicability and interpretation	Problem and solution
Advocate / Policy maker	Method	Simplicity through criticizing normatively biased or overly-complex data gathering and interpretation; and complexity through asking for continual refinement	Solution and problem

Indeed, in an inversion of usual spheres of competence — academics concerned with method, policy makers concerned with interpretation of data — we found we were well-received when we asserted that the data being produced, irrespective of the method, could only be well understood in their context, thereby contributing to the bracketing of the strategy/context relationship (see Schomerus, 2014). This was the easiest way for someone to sink an indicator: layering complexity onto it until it collapsed under its own weight. Demanding that a proposed indicator be increasingly context-specific prevented it from fulfilling an ordering function. Instead, the indicator simply became another word for data gathering. In this way, participants strove to retain for themselves the methodological or technical competence to gather data without specifying where and when that would take place.

In Figure 2, we stylize the role playing that we saw most frequently when knowledge generation was raised as an issue. Academics and advocates tried to be a little bit policy maker, policy makers tried to be a little bit academic, and everyone did so as a means of contesting who might have the authority to gather data in an undetermined future and a generic place.

Knowledge Translation

Knowledge translation involves claiming competence over how to interpret data — or working out what an indicator might actually indicate. In the opening session, everyone was exhorted to ‘measure what we treasure, not treasure what we measure’. This directive established a tension between normativity and pragmatism that remained palpable throughout the workshop. We struggled with the trade-offs between interpreting data in light of goals and producing goals in light of available data. We saw coalitions emerge between participants over specific matters such as child rights or gender equality. Within these coalitions, some people adopted the role of advocates

making a normative case. Others took on the role of pragmatic doers, often undermining other suggested indicators with the accusation that it would be too difficult to parse the data, that the indicator was too subjective, that it would be politically untenable to push specific indicators through the UN machinery, and so on. Frequently, these roles subverted the logic of the speaker’s native tribe. On violence against women and girls, some of the most powerful advocates emerged from the ranks of policy makers, deeply passionate as a result of their experiences in the field. Effective pragmatic voices surfaced from the ranks of advocates, based on their production of detailed victimization surveys.

Hovering behind these coalitions was a tension between the relativizing spectre of contextualized data and the generalizing exorcism of a call to action. For example, one participant suggested an indicator on femicide. That participant did so as an advocate, drawing on a series of micro-level stories about the horrendous treatment of women and girls, and also as a pragmatic policy maker, citing the availability of the necessary administrative data. When several people around the table questioned how to meaningfully interpret rates of femicide across different contexts (might this not severely undercount the deaths of females due to the gender dimension of structural factors such as malnutrition, for example?), a policy person defended the indicator by adopting an advocate’s voice, reiterating the urgency of protecting female lives. Another participant from an advocacy organization then argued that the suggested indicator would likely get support in the post-2015 process, leveraging his advocacy position to establish a powerful link between his normative and strategic statements.

Multiple spatio-temporalities were simultaneously at play: the immediate urgency to produce indicators that we felt in the UN’s Viennese building, the longer-term timeline of the post-2015 process at the global level, and the open horizon of those unknown future moments when we would have to interpret data in some contextual setting. All that remained concrete was people individually asserting that they knew best how to interpret data in any and all of those different moments.

In Figure 3, we stylize the role playing that we saw most frequently around knowledge translation. Everybody tried to be a little bit of everything, and everyone did so as a means of asserting their ability to deal with the tension between normativity and pragmatism.

Figure 3. Performances around Knowledge Translation

Role	Logic	Approach	Tactic
All	Critique, normativity, instrumentality	Complexity through context, simplicity through norms, methods and strategy	Problem/solution

Knowledge Transmission

Knowledge transmitters know how to turn information into policy — for example, informing domestic policy makers whether femicide or road deaths (or something else entirely) matter, and what to do about it. When discussions turned to the links between indicators and action, they were explicitly framed in terms of space and time, as in this exchange:

X: We must ensure these indicators are on issues relevant to the context of all of the Member States.

Y: But what of the local impact? An indicator on judges per capita tells you very little about the quality of the rule of law for large swathes of sub-Saharan Africa. It might lead to policies that dislodge traditional justice mechanisms that are much more relevant to most people.

X: Then maybe we should think about how to disaggregate these indicators. We could produce a menu of goals and baskets of indicators that could be tailored to country circumstances as we go . . .

Y: That's just not going to be politically feasible in the post-2015 process. We should get real. There's going to be one set of goals voted for by the General Assembly.

Time and space remained fluid: the UN building, the post-2015 timeline, moments of local implementation, national data gathering, and so on. They flowed around a concrete 'we'. This 'we' existed in the meso-level times and spaces between the indistinct international on the one hand, and concrete implementation on the other. These were the times and spaces that would be inhabited by anyone aspiring to be part of the work of implementing the SDGs over the next 15 years.

This 'we' was narrated almost exclusively in policy-making mode, foreclosing critical or normative discussion of implementation. Invoking 'context' could have been a way in which the 'we' could have dissolved: just as 'context' functioned as a tool to collapse suggested data-gathering methods and interpretations of data, asking who 'we' were to implement the indicators could have relativized and fragmented us. Yet speaking of the 'context' of implementation lost its power. Rather than serving as a vehicle to critique our unsubtle oversimplifications, evoking 'context' drew attention instead to the difficulties of meso-level implementation. It encouraged participants to suggest further interim fixes, such as baskets of indicators and menus of goals.

As such, invoking 'context' functioned as a way of claiming certain types of (meso) work while disclaiming others by turning the local into an unsolvable problem. In a normative register, calling on context facilitated skipping straight to issues of global concern — that is, non-state issues of universal importance (for example the immediate experience of young girls confronted with early marriage). This then raised questions of the political feasibility of the indicator given the exigencies of the post-2015 process and the need for universal adoption by states. We could then claim the opportunity to work on global politics and national technical capacity, while distancing ourselves from the politically unfeasible work of local inquiries into early marriage.

Figure 4. Performances around Knowledge Transmission

Role	Logic	Approach	Tactic
Academic / Policy maker	Local-to-meso	Local complexity and big picture clarity	Problem and solution
Policy maker	Global-to-meso	Local simplicity and big picture strategy	Problem and solution
Advocate / Policy maker	Local-to-global-to-meso	Local simplicity and big picture normativity and big picture strategy	Solution and problem

In Figure 4, we stylize the role playing that we saw most frequently around knowledge transmission. Everybody tried to be more of a policy maker, as a means of ordering space and time around our role in implementation.

Implementation in Imagined Space and Time

In Vienna, we produced an imagined time and space of implementation populated exclusively by us. Unhindered by pesky content to ideas of security and justice, that we might have to reduce to governing technicalities or anti-politics (Duffield, 2001; Ferguson, 1994), we could freely produce this fluid and always-interim time and space. As a result, we performed and transgressed the structural limitations to our roles, logics, approaches and tactics. Indeed, the promise that these limitations existed made our movement between scepticism, pragmatism and optimism all the more effective. Having gone beyond these limitations, all that remained were our claims that we could generate, translate and transmit knowledge (insofar as doing so would be valuable and would not expose us to any messy stuff). In sum, we were data gatherers and normative pragmatists, forever occupying the meso space of implementation and the resources that went with it.

While the indicators themselves were not necessarily depoliticizing, the structure of this meso space did produce political effects. Systematic questions were expressed in technical terms (such as our relationship to governments being about their *technical capacities*, and how support might occur through capacity building to gather data), while the political was made personal (such as how difficult it was, conveyed through individual anecdotes, to work with national counterparts or local NGOs who might run surveys). This precluded participants from attempting to talk about the power relationships between donors, professional experts, national governments, transnational civil society and sub-national organizations in systematic terms. And yet, these power relationships are an important component of the implementation of global goals and indicators.

The critical energy of academic scepticism could not effectively challenge this move away from power relationships and towards technical capacity. An academic critique of systematic power needs an analytical ‘outside’; but this ‘outside’ was always already inside and part of the debate in Vienna. Critical thoughts were mobilized not to close the imagined meso space but to produce it. Critique provided a tool to undermine global and local claims — with the global emerging as over-determined and the local as unsolvable.

Thoughts about chains of implementing relationships could only be expressed in pragmatic, policy-making terms. One participant — ostensibly an advocate — pointed out that donors frequently set agendas by funding national statistics agencies and thereby determining what they measure. Others quickly built on his point to suggest that national security and justice indicator development processes be piloted (with funding) to help the international community learn how to best and most effectively partner with national and local actors.

This imagined meso space and time of implementation was not a political space. Rather, it could best be described as an ethical space for global administrators: a space that was framed around *our* decisions, and around where we would eventually build our individual roles in future implementation. Defining the scope of implementation meant that we could claim elements of it even as we demarcated our responsibilities, in particular whether and how we would relate to the people we were seeking to govern (Greene and Reed, 1969: 96).

‘HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ANYBODY’.²² PERCEPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN SOUTH SUDAN

In South Sudan’s Western Equatoria State, a group of young men, united in their endeavour to provide physical protection from security threats to their communities, were discussing the merits of sharing information about their situation with me, Mareike. I duly noted down their words, translated by a South Sudanese researcher. One topic that elicited particularly strong responses was the frequency with which white people would stop and ask questions about their security situation. I had a pretty good idea who the other outsiders had been: I knew about international military personnel (under the UN logo, or flying the flags of Uganda, the African Union or the US) and representatives from a prominent international advocacy group. My own business card called me a researcher, clearly setting me apart. I did not need to report back to command headquarters and I was comfortable in the understanding that my work would, at best, hover in the general debate.

22. Greene and Reed (1969: 43).

Before I left the interview, the young men challenged me:

The kind of questions the other white men asked were the same you were asking about our lives . . . You don't come back to tell us what has been done with this information. You are not even putting it into a newspaper so we can confirm that is really what we said. Is this because you are taking information only for our fun? For your money? Or because you turn information around and write something that we have not said?²³

I explained that as an academic researcher, gathering, analysing and distributing information was already a task so complex that what would happen with the information subsequently need not — and could not — be my concern.²⁴ I was quickly rebuffed. 'You have come all the way to see . . . What is going to be your contribution after you have seen personally the situation?'.²⁵ A woman in a community meeting voiced her frustration with a process that had become all-too familiar: 'there was a team that came to us and we expressed our challenges and there was no feedback. So now that we expressed our challenges, what is the way forward? What are the next steps? That team came and promised us to bring sheets of clothes and sewing machine. But there was no feedback'.²⁶ Forget different logics, roles, identities, locations of knowledge. If they were going to be researched, developed and governed by those bringing ideologies, methods and questions, what was in it for them?

Of course, this is an ancient dilemma. What should the relationship be between the real world and what a researcher captures on paper? Myriad political and ethical questions are caught up in the twinned crises of representation and professional identity, all of which have been asked and answered in many different guises. Post-colonial critics point to the Eurocentrism of projects like mine: in their view, by purporting to carry the voice of the South Sudanese into distant centres of perceived international power, I produce a post-colonial cliché that is at best irrelevant to everyday life in South Sudan.²⁷ Others seek new methodological and representational strategies, often involving 'bringing research back' to the communities under study in more or less meaningful ways.²⁸ In the context of my role in South Sudan, the key question my respondents were interested in was functional,

23. Author interview, group of arrow boys in Tambura County, 20 May 2013.

24. Kapoor (2008: 42) asks the pertinent question in his discussion of post-colonial development politics: "'To what extent do our depictions and actions marginalize or silence these groups and mask our own complicities?'" It is a question worth returning to when extracting information about everyday life that is then shared amongst a small audience, or an audience that seeks only particular types of information such that it quickly discards it'.

25. Author interview, group of arrow boys in Tambura County, 20 May 2013.

26. Author interview, community meeting in Ezo County, 6 May 2013.

27. See, generally, the contributions of Morris, Spivak, Chatterjee and Birla in Morris (2010); for a critique specific to development research, see Raghuram and Madge (2006).

28. On the applied side, see, for example, Moreno et al. (2015); on the academic side, see, for example, Gupta and Ferguson (1997).

or a matter of reciprocal exchange: what indeed my contribution would be after seeing personally the situation.

So what *was* my contribution? Well, among other things, my fieldwork would land me a seat at a table like the one in Vienna. There, I would distribute my (professional, and thus faithful, sensitive, politically-aware) rendering of the immediate and complex reality of these young men. Through my representation of their experience, I could introduce a different time and space into the debate: the spatial context of the individuals and groups demanding to know what was in it for them, and the immediacy and urgency with which they demanded that. The process of the debate would then be about specifying trade-offs and making hard policy choices by balancing my contextual knowledge with abstract and universal claims. And hopefully my research subjects would end up being served by aid that was slightly better targeted to their situation — even though the challenge of linking armed community security and demand for sewing machines would be a substantial one for any policy maker or implementer.

However, the process in Vienna — or indeed any attempt to produce authoritative and policy-relevant knowledge about indeterminate things — was not about making hard policy choices. Instead, it was about deferring, bracketing and keeping not just choices but the time and place of choosing for ourselves. Establishing such power to choose does not undermine an academic researcher's ethical justification for participating in such research: at some point in the future, something good — power, clothes, a sewing machine — might well 'feed back' to respondents.²⁹ Instead, this practice of deferral raises a different ethical challenge: how experts use the image of those being represented.

My respondents remained what David Kennedy (1993: 196) calls 'reader[s] of last resort' of my research. They were ultimate guarantors of the validity of my work and the gold reserves behind my academic currency. And yet they were strangely hypothetical. The more those being researched — the fourth force in the room — were invoked in Vienna, the more they 'mystically reced[ed]' (ibid.) and the further away they seemed. They were real only at some vague moment of problem recognition in the past and implementation in the future. They were certainly used as a way of making concerns immediate. Yet at the same time, their image in all its complexity could be used to defer action, since we could certainly all agree that context matters, and thus more contextual research might be needed.

This fourth force thus functioned as a placeholder for our future engagement with them. Their information bought me a place at the table. The

29. The materiality of this type of 'feedback' distinguishes it from ideas of bringing 'research' back to those being researched — meaning a researcher presents the narratives or research findings she has generated to those being narrated. Presenting research findings in this way expresses a concern with the ethics and transparency of storytelling as a process and practice, rather than with research as an instrument to generate subsequent action, as discussed here.

discussions around the table produced the possibility of implementation and control over resources, and implementation held out the promise of a good and reasonable outcome for the South Sudanese. The three forces in the room, as a side effect, were protected from criticism by referring to the fourth force in South Sudan and elsewhere. Those who might directly experience and perhaps condemn the effects of consultations in Vienna had thus become part of the consultations' fabric. As Harry Lime says to Holly Martins, when Holly realizes he has been woven into Harry's greater shadowy game, 'I'd like to cut you in, you know. We always did things together . . . I've no one left in Vienna I can really trust' (Greene and Reed, 1969: 99).

CONCLUSION: 'OF COURSE, A SITUATION LIKE THAT DOES TEMPT AMATEURS',³⁰

Harry Lime sells adulterated penicillin, but shrugs off any concerns about the human cost. 'Nobody thinks in terms of human beings', he says. 'Governments don't, so why should we? They talk of the people and the proletariat, and I talk of the mugs. It's the same thing. They have their five year plans and so have I' (Greene and Reed, 1969: 98). As long as there are places like post-war Vienna where the boundaries between occupying forces allow Harry Lime to disappear into another sector to evade responsibility for his actions, place and time do not matter.

Where does this leave us? First, our experience highlights how limited our understanding is about where and how political contestation and critical intervention in global knowledge practices might take place. Academics usually imagine their own sites behind tall walls of ivory, demarcating a critical outside to which they can retreat, however unstable they might recognize those walls to be (Lewis and Mosse, 2006b; Riles, 2006; Shore et al., 2011). From that vantage point, they assume that engagement can be strategized. Yet our experience shows that for battles over the content of concepts such as security and justice, those outside spaces actually sit squarely on the field of battle, with doors open to all. We thus suggest that we need to retool in order to produce ethical critiques that allocate responsibility by situating experts in a series of policy decisions (or non-decisions). Otherwise, existing political critiques will fall short of the mark.

Existing critiques ask questions like 'Is the division of labour right? Who wins and loses from it? Are the actors fulfilling their roles?'. Yet these critiques rest on working within and through fictional groups like 'academics' and 'policy makers'. Allocating responsibilities to these fictional groups fails to hold real actors to account. A straightforward turn to studying practice to develop such critiques is insufficient: the study of practice too often falls into a dramaturgy of these roles.

30. Greene and Reed (1969: 12).

Our story of efforts to generate global governance through indeterminate concepts suggests another way of thinking about expert roles and responsibilities in global governance. We must develop tools that are at the same time individually reflective *and* sensitive to institutional politics. For academics, this means linking the details of an individual academic's participation in knowledge production to the political question of the broader role of the academy as an institutional participant in the fragmented world of global governance — and determining under what circumstances the two are contradictory or mutually supportive.

Does the fluidity of roles and responsibilities necessarily lead to processes and outcomes that are as relentlessly self-interested, casuistic and ethically superficial as Harry Lime? Quite the contrary. All of us sat around the table in Vienna were skilled at marshalling and repurposing different sets of arguments and logics. We were equally adept at turning people into images to produce the to-be-populated space of implementation. Yet we believe that the figure of the slippery expert can be ethically productive, rather than incorrigibly Lime-ish. The slippery expert places the many future decisions that go into implementation into the limelight, rather than keeping them in the shade off-stage. Emphasizing contradictions rather than drawing clear boundaries also reminds us that indicators can take on a life of their own (Riles, 2006). They offer the potential for *anyone* to convert deferral into decision at any moment, as histories of other types of bureaucratic documentation and knowledge production suggest (Mosse, 2004; Olivier de Sardan, 2009; Seidman, 1982; Wade, 1996).

Both an ethical critique and a potential repurposing of knowledge production in global governance must be predicated on an applied theory of the same. This theory must seek to understand the politics of instantiation and determination along the chains of governance produced from the global to the local, taking in the different types of actors in between. This will be of ever-more importance as the SDG-inspired 'data revolution' in aid leads to many more such consultations and intensifies and metastasizes knowledge practices.³¹ What will happen to moments of decision when we have multiple and overlapping fictional spaces of implementation? What different techniques and images of the governed might be used to produce these spaces and keep them open? As a result, how will these spaces relate to each other, and be governed?

The Third Man ends after Harry Lime's death. Yet there is no redemption. Holly Martins is hardly freed by having killed his best friend. The victims of Harry's crimes go unmentioned and many relationships are destroyed. The work of getting closure, for Martins and the rest of the world, has only just begun. One of the last things Martins says of Vienna is: 'I can't just leave' (Greene and Reed, 1969: 120). Vienna can be anywhere and

31. For a summary, see www.undatarevolution.org/ (last accessed 5 November 2015).

everywhere — an indeterminate time and place of fractured governance that we produce, populate and from which we extract what we need. As for Holly Martins, so for us: Vienna will be present whenever and wherever we go, and just like Harry Lime, we made it so.

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Deval Desai (corresponding author; deval.desai@graduateinstitute.ch) is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Hirschman Centre on Democracy at the Graduate Institute, Geneva, Switzerland. He researches legal reform, expertise and ignorance, and has published on these in the *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, *Humanity*, and the *Journal of Development Studies*.

Mareike Schomerus (m.schomerus@odi.org.uk) is a Senior Research Fellow in Politics and Governance at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, UK. Her work — published in the *Journal of Development Studies*, *Security Dialogue*, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* and *Civil Wars* — focuses on peace processes, armed groups, civilian/military relations and the experience of living in conflict situations.